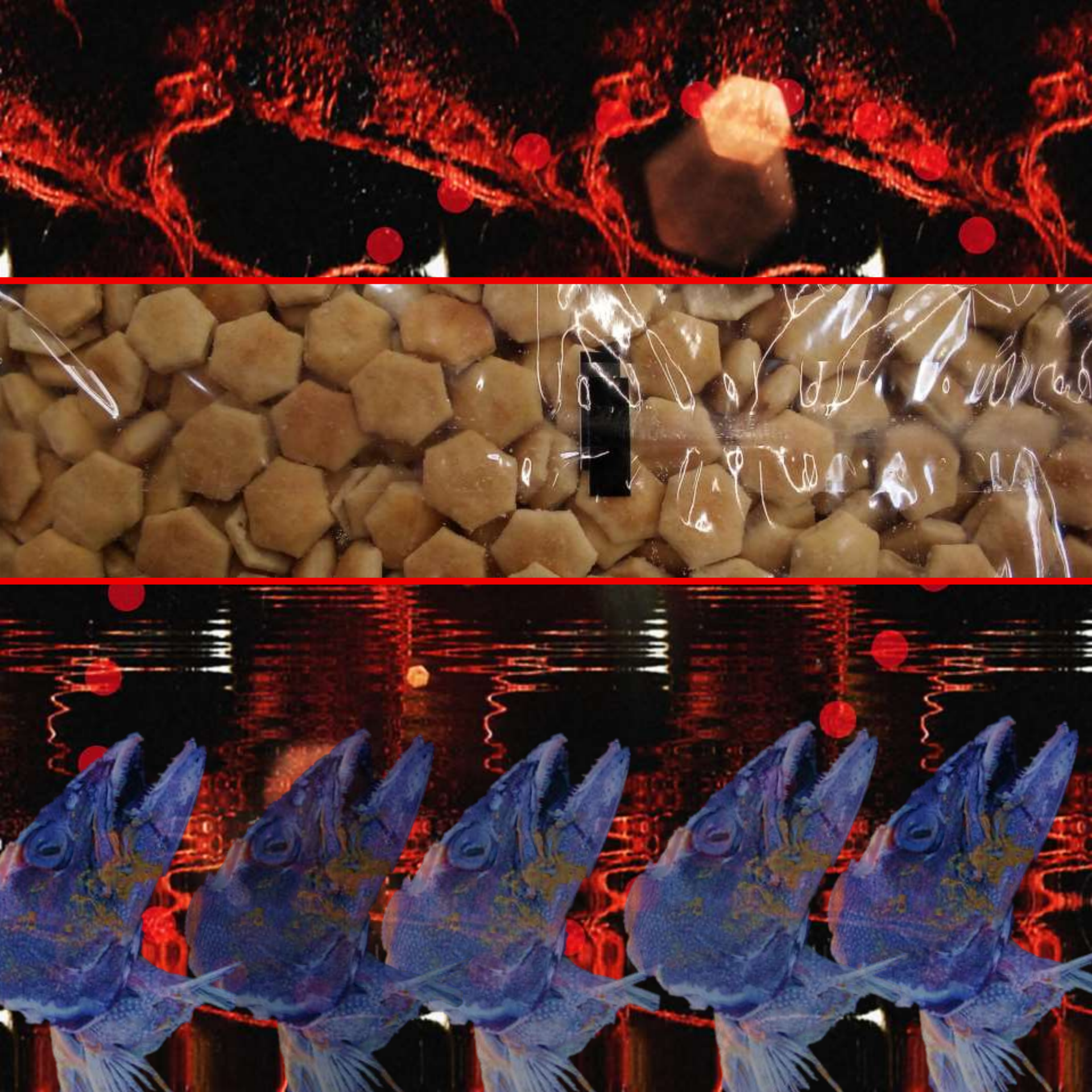
Fowl Feathered Review
No 191



Issue 191: Surrender To the Shimmering Fragments: Exit, Pursued by a Dream.

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

Return Policy:
If this magazine does not meet your expectations,
please return it to us in its original condition
for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded)
To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it’s more likely a testament to the local takeout joint’s generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

“Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco.”

— Virgil, The Aeneid

To the Discerning, the Disordered, and the Devoted Readers of *Fowl Feathered Review,*

A strange wind, born of forgotten alleys and the deep hum of ancient machinery, has swept through our roost. It carries the scent of ink, the metallic tang of old film, and the faint, unsettling perfume of wild, foraged berries. This is not merely Issue 191; this is a testament, a proclamation whispered from the very marrow of what we have always sought to unearth.

Here, the mundane dissolves into the mythical with the disorienting logic of a waking dream. You will find the chipped teacup of daily existence resonating with the solemn toll of a bell from a cathedral built of smoke, its every crack a testament to the weight of unspoken history.

The prose within is a visceral un-forming of reality, dense and shimmering, yet starkly precise, like paint applied with the raw gesture of a desperate hand, or a stage set cobbled from the debris of forgotten lives. It carries the scars of a desperate existence, yet shines with an unsettling beauty, much like makeup caked on an old clown's face, revealing more than it conceals.

This is not a linear journey. The narratives shift like shadows under a flickering lamp, abrupt and profound, mirroring the spontaneous performances staged in forgotten courtyards or on the decks of a drifting barge. You will encounter truths delivered in clipped dialogue, hinting at vast, unseen motivations, or in grand pronouncements that carry the inherent comedy and tragedy of a king's last jest. This is a whispered documentation, a shadow-archive of moments too fleeting for the eye alone, captured with ingenious resourcefulness. Listen closely, and you might hear the crackling static of illicit recordings salvaged from discarded X-rays, preserving the very breath of a disappearing world.

Every page, every image, every title bears the mark of an adopted identity, an ancestral scrawl that hints at a deep, re-discovered cultural memory. It is a raw, expressive script, born of new tongues and old longings, transforming lived experience into a stylized, uniquely resonant art. This is the persistent, adapted genius of those who simply refused

to stop creating, no matter their exile, their physical changes, or the shifting demands of fate.

Issue 191 contains multitudes. It is the culmination of our disorderly quarterly's tireless pursuit since day one: to present a new way of perceiving and expressing things through fiction, poetry, and art. It is a profound, perverse tenderness of observation, a detached yet deeply empathetic gaze that finds beauty in decay, dignity in absurdity, and a strange comfort in melancholy. It is a keeper, a testament to the fact that even in the most unlikely of places, the grand play of human existence continues, captured and re-presented by unseen hands.

Sincerely,

Virgil Kay

Editor, Rooster, China Wok Habitué

与印象。

the veiled impress.

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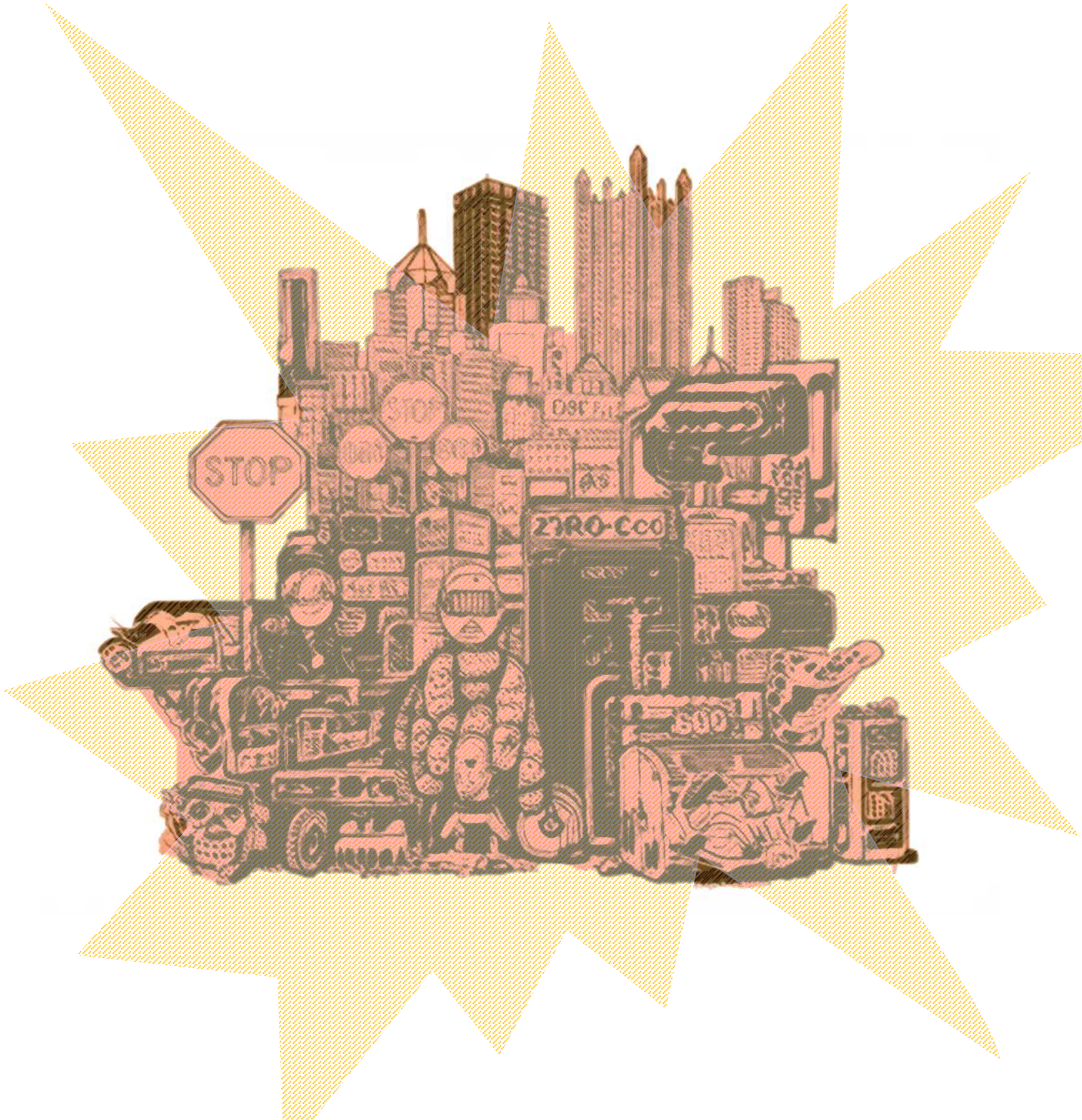

STOP
ZERO-CCO
SOD

PITTSBURGH 2.0:

A TEENAGE RENAISSANCE IN THE RUINS

By Ubréak Ubüi

With an introduction by a trio of venerable, if somewhat opinionated, theatrical archetypes: The Cantankerous Curmudgeon, The Grandiloquent Romantic, and The Wry Observer, as channeled through the digestive tract of a galloping mule.

Introduction

The Cantankerous Curmudgeon: "One must, with due reverence to the gods of irony, acknowledge that these juvenile architects of ruin have—through some alchemy of Wi-Fi deprivation and expired Adderall—stumbled upon a post-capitalist Gesamtkunstwerk more trenchant than a thousand Federalist Papers. Their manifesto, scrawled in the liturgical ink of Gatorade Glacier Freeze and nail-polish epoxy, is nothing less than the Magna Carta of the Attention-Deficit Apocalypse."
The Grandiloquent Romantic: "Ah! The pomegranate seeds, bleeding like rubies down the chin of this Loki of the strip malls—what is this if not the Madame Bovary of our age? A generation raised on the algorithmic sublime, now forced to confront the texture of reality itself: rust, epoxy, the hollow eyes of mannequins. Their tragedy is not that they have lost the world, but that they must curate its corpse."

The Wry Observer: "Imagine, if you will, a collaboration between Federico Fellini and the McDonald's Monopoly promotion team, staged in the rubble of a city that once manufactured steel and now manufactures vibes. These enfants terribles have, with the solemnity of Swiss watchmakers and the absurdist flair of Dadaist plumbers, constructed a monument to the death of context."

The Text (Expanded, with Philosophical Interludes)

1. The Blast (or, the Ultimate Content Wipe)

The explosion had been, as all modern cataclysms are, aesthetic first, lethal second. No mushroom cloud—just a glitch, a hiccup in the feed, and then Pittsburgh was a meme: flattened, hashtagged, ready for remix. The teens, marooned in their grocery carts

(chariots of the pre-collapse consumerist pantheon), blinked at the nothing like philosophers who'd just been handed the wrong ancient scroll.

Kaiyō, formerly Kyle (a name he'd shed like a shed snakeskin after binging One Piece during the Great Quarantine Boredom), spat a sunflower seed into the dust. "Yo," he said, because what else does one say when the infrastructure becomes art installation? "We building."

(A melancholic Russian novelist, whispering from the wings: "They build because they must—because to not build is to admit that the void has already won. But what is a city, really, but a collective hallucination held together by steel and delusion?")

11. The Scavenger's Sonnet (or, the New Decameron)

Z3R0-Cool (née Zara, a name she'd cybernetically augmented after Cyberpunk 2077 broke her heart) welded the Duquesne Incline from a stop sign and a dentist's chair, because why not? The why not was the whole point. Lokii (né Logan, a Loki variant who'd wept at Frozen and thus ascended to a higher plane of irony) stirred epoxy like a alchemist who'd lost his grimoire but kept his TikTok filters.

Lokii: "Bro, if we paint the Smithfield Street Bridge pink, it's not cringe—it's critical infrastructure satire."

Kaiyō: "Nah. Do it chrome. Like a cyber-tomb for all the Boomers who ghosted us mid-apocalypse."

(A celebrated chronicler of American culture, adjusting his white suit: "This is the Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test for the NFT generation—a happening where the participants are both the artists and the artifacts.")

III. The Aesthetics of Loss (or, the Museum of Mid Conversations)

They curated the detritus like Louvre archivists on a meth bender. Z3R0-Cool's AR diary flickered with entries:

"Day 12: Found a 'I ♥ PGH' mug. Heart's cracked. Symbolism. Also, Lokii ate a raw pomegranate like an apple. Seeds bled down his chin like tiny rubies. Aesthetic as hell." (A reclusive French author, nibbling a madeleine: "The pomegranate is their involuntary memory—a fruit that bleeds when bitten, just as the past bleeds into the present, staining it with seeds of meaning.")

They debated whether Gatorade Glacier Freeze was the last blue on Earth, a question that Plato might have posed if he'd been raised on Mountain Dew and Twitter.

IV. The Performance (Or, The Last Zoom Meeting)

On the roof of a crumpled parking garage (a Brutalist stage for their absurdist passion play), they performed "The Last Zoom Meeting." Kaiyō played a CEO with the gravitas of King Lear at a WeWork, while Lokii heckled in the language of corporate necromancy: "Synergy? Bruh, we got scavenged Spam and expired Adderall. Pivot to survival."

The mannequins (their audience) stared with hollow eyes, their silence more profound than any Shakespearean soliloquy.

(A dapper British comedian, adjusting his glasses: "It's Waiting for Godot meets Unboxing Therapy—a theater of the absurd where the absurdity is the only sane response.")

V. The Pomegranate Oracle (or the End of History)

At the heart of Pittsburgh 2.0, they planted a pomegranate sapling in a shopping cart, its roots cradled in potting soil and crushed Xbox controllers. Lokii placed a Burger King tiara upon its branches, a coronation fit for a king of scrap.
Kaiyō: "This is our Renaissance. Shakespeare had globe theatres. We got Target carts and Wi-Fi withdrawal."

(A gravelly American troubadour, strumming a ghost guitar: "The mannequins in the pink-orange sky watch as the kids build a city out of spite and epoxy and the last blue Gatorade ...")
Somewhere, a phone buzzed—a notification from a dead network.
Z3R0-Cool grinned. "Plot twist: We're the NPCs now."

Epíloque (By A Postmodern Phílosopher, In Marginalía)

"This is not a story. It is a palimpsest of late-capitalist detritus, a Borgesian map that replaces the territory. The pomegranate is both fruit and symbol, the shopping cart both womb and tomb. These children of the algorithm have become the authors of their own oblivion, and in doing so, they have transcended it."

THE END

(or the algorithm's best guess at one).

THE CUTCHOGUE CARNAGE: A HALLWAY PERFORMANCE

BY QUINN T. SENTIAL

Program Notes: An Immersive Theatrical Experiment (Or Why Are We Standing Here?) Presented by the Cutchogue Historical & Dramaturgical Society (CHDS), in association with "Vin de Hurley" (a vintage of questionable provenance).

Welcome, esteemed patrons of the peculiar, to this singular, dare we say, anatomically challenging, theatrical experience. You stand, or perch precariously, within the hallowed, albeit horizontally challenged, confines of the "Davenant Hallway," a meticulously (and perhaps masochistically) recreated performance space within a Cutchogue waterfront property. Our aim, much like Sir William Davenant's audacious endeavors at Rutland House in 1656, is to circumvent the tiresome strictures of conventional staging – and, frankly, to see if we can fit more than three people and a potted plant into a single dramatic tableau without recourse to advanced geometry.

Tonight, we offer a "preview," a mere hors d'oeuvre of existential dread, from our forthcoming magnum opus, The Cutchogue Carnage. This work, a collaborative fever-

dream of historical re-enactment, speculative ornithology, and the enduring mystery of a man who owned too many pastel polo shirts, seeks to plumb the depths of the infamous "Nicolas Hurley Incident" of last summer. We are, in essence, gauging your reaction. If you find yourselves inexplicably craving cannoli or developing an inexplicable urge to quote Hamlet at your mailman, our mission is accomplished.

Please note the improvised benches, angled with a cunning that would make a contortionist weep. Observe the "Cup-board Stage," a marvel of minimalist design, adorned with what we believe are genuine gold and purple shower curtains. And listen closely for the subtle strains emanating from the "Louver Hole" above – our concealed "orchestra" (primarily a kazoo and a recording of a seagull having an existential crisis).

We invite you to suspend disbelief, ignore the faint scent of chlorine, and prepare for a narrative journey that will, we trust, leave you both enlightened and mildly disoriented. Should you find yourself questioning the very fabric of reality, or simply the structural integrity of this hallway, rest assured: that is precisely the point. And please, mind the wet socks.

The hallway was, by any reasonable metric, less a thoroughfare and more a protracted sigh. It was long, narrow, and possessed a peculiar curvature that suggested either a faulty blueprint or a particularly enthusiastic game of architectural Twister. Along its length, a motley collection of folding chairs and repurposed milk crates served as "seating," angled precariously towards a small alcove at the far end. This alcove, adorned with shimmering, suspiciously plasticine gold and purple curtains, was the "Cup-board Stage." Above it, a discreet vent, the "Louver Hole," occasionally emitted a tinny, off-key rendition of "Flight of the Bumblebee."

Tonight, the air, usually thick with the scent of salt and suntan lotion, was charged with an almost palpable theatricality, mingled with the unmistakable tang of chlorine.

Officer "Skeeter" Malone, looking less like a bulwark of law enforcement and more like a man who'd lost a wrestling match with his own uniform, stood center-hallway, attempting a gravitas usually reserved for a particularly solemn pronouncement of overdue library books. He held a prop feather, absurdly large and iridescent.

"Hark!" Skeeter boomed, his voice echoing off the narrow walls with an unfortunate nasal resonance. "What light through yonder window breaks? 'Tis but the dawn of a day most foul, a day of... carnage!" He gestured dramatically towards the "stage," where a dummy, draped in a familiar pastel polo, lay amidst a scattering of plastic grapes. It was a crude, yet oddly effective, representation of Nicky Hurley, the "victim."

Maria "Ma" Rubino, perched on an overturned bucket, her arms crossed, surveyed the scene with the weary disdain of a woman who'd seen too many bad plays and too many bad haircuts. "Oh, for crying out loud, Skeeter. You sound like a broken record, and not the good kind, like Tony Bennett. Less 'Hark,' more 'Hurry up, I got cannolis to make.' This ain't Broadway, it's a hallway. And that dummy looks more like it choked on a bad clam than got pecked by a prehistoric pigeon."

From the "Louver Hole," a faint, reedy kazoo note wavered, followed by a sound suspiciously like a recorded seagull choking on a fish.

"Silence, good woman!" Skeeter blustered, momentarily forgetting his lines and reverting to his natural Long Island cadence. "This is art! This is a re-enactment! We are plumbing the depths of human depravity, the very heart of the Hurley Incident!"

Just then, a door at the far end of the hallway creaked open. Uncle Malcolm, a man whose flaccid physique suggested a lifelong commitment to the horizontal, shuffled in. He was dripping wet, a faint trail of seawater following him like a reluctant shadow. A beatific, almost congenital smile was plastered on his face, a smile that seemed immune to the grim realities of the world, or indeed, the theatrical re-enactment unfolding before

him. He began, with a slow, deliberate grace, to peel off a sodden sock. The squelching sound was surprisingly loud in the confined space.

Ma Rubino rolled her eyes. "Oh, for the love of... Malcolm, you're gonna catch your death. And you're tracking water all over my good rug. This ain't the Atlantic, it's a hallway." Skeeter, momentarily flummoxed by Uncle Malcolm's untimely entrance, fumbled with his prop feather. "By the gods, what apparition is this? A drowned man, returned from Neptune's briny deep to witness our solemn rites?"

Uncle Malcolm, oblivious, finished removing the first sock, then leaned down, his face contorting in a silent, Herculean effort to blow his nose into a surprisingly clean handkerchief. The trumpet-like honk resonated through the hallway.

"See?" Ma muttered, nudging Skeeter with her elbow. "Now that's drama. You could cut the tension with a butter knife. Or a wet sock."

Skeeter cleared his throat, attempting to regain his composure. "As I was saying, the fiend, the feathered fiend, did descend upon our hapless victim with a hunger most... unquenchable!" He gestured again towards the dummy, then, with a flourish, produced a small, crudely drawn sketch of a terror bird. "Behold! The beast itself! A creature of nightmare, a veritable feathered velociraptor, a... a Phorusrhacid!"

Suddenly, from behind the "Cup-board Stage" curtains, a low, guttural growl rumbled. It was deep, resonant, and utterly unlike the kazoo or the seagull. The gold and purple curtains rippled.

Skeeter's eyes widened. "By the Bard's own beard! 'Tis but a sound effect, a clever trick of the light and shadow, to enhance our dramatic tension!" He laughed, a high, nervous titter. "Right? Elle? That's you, isn't it? With the sound machine?"

The curtains parted. Not by human hand, but by the colossal, rust-colored head of a fully-grown Phorusrhacid. Its beady eyes, reflecting the dim hallway lights, fixed on Skeeter. It was larger than any sound machine, and considerably more toothy. A low,

menacing cluck, a sound that could curdle milk and inspire instant regret, emanated from its throat.

"Oh, for crying out loud," Ma Rubino whispered, her usual bravado draining from her face like bathwater. "That ain't no sound effect. That's a problem."
The terror bird took a single, deliberate step out from behind the curtains, its powerful legs thudding softly on the polished wood floor. It surveyed the "audience" – a handful of bewildered onlookers crammed onto milk crates – then turned its gaze back to the "stage."

Uncle Malcolm, meanwhile, had finished with his first sock and was now, with the same serene determination, tackling the second. He pulled, he tugged, he grunted softly. The terror bird, seemingly distracted by this display of profound human effort, tilted its head.

"A villain, a villain, smiling, damned villain!" Skeeter shrieked, abandoning all pretense of theatricality and attempting to scramble over the folding chairs. "It's real! It's actually real! I knew I should've taken that desk job!"

The Phorusrhacid, with a speed that belied its size, lunged. Not at Skeeter, not at Ma Rubino, but at the source of the most compelling, most utterly oblivious, and most easily digestible distraction.

Uncle Malcolm, mid-pull on his second wet sock, looked up, his congenital smile still firmly in place. He had just enough time to register the enormous, gaping beak descending upon him, a beak that seemed to fill his entire field of vision. There was a wet, tearing sound, a brief, muffled squawk that was not avian, and then... silence.

The terror bird, its beak now adorned with a single, remarkably clean wet sock, blinked. It then turned its head, its beady eyes sweeping over the horrified faces in the hallway. A faint, almost imperceptible burp escaped its throat.

Ma Rubino, her mouth agape, dropped her broom. "Well," she managed, her voice a strained whisper, "that's one way to get rid of a wet sock."

Skeeter, now truly cowering behind a particularly flimsy coat rack, whimpered, "Oh, the horror! The horror! A tragedy most foul! And I didn't even get to my soliloquy about the nature of justice!"

The Phorusrhacid, seemingly satisfied with its impromptu snack, gave another low cluck, then, with a surprising grace, turned and disappeared back behind the gold and purple curtains of the "Cup-board Stage." The "Louver Hole" above emitted a final, triumphant kazoo blast, followed by the distinct sound of a distant ambulance siren.

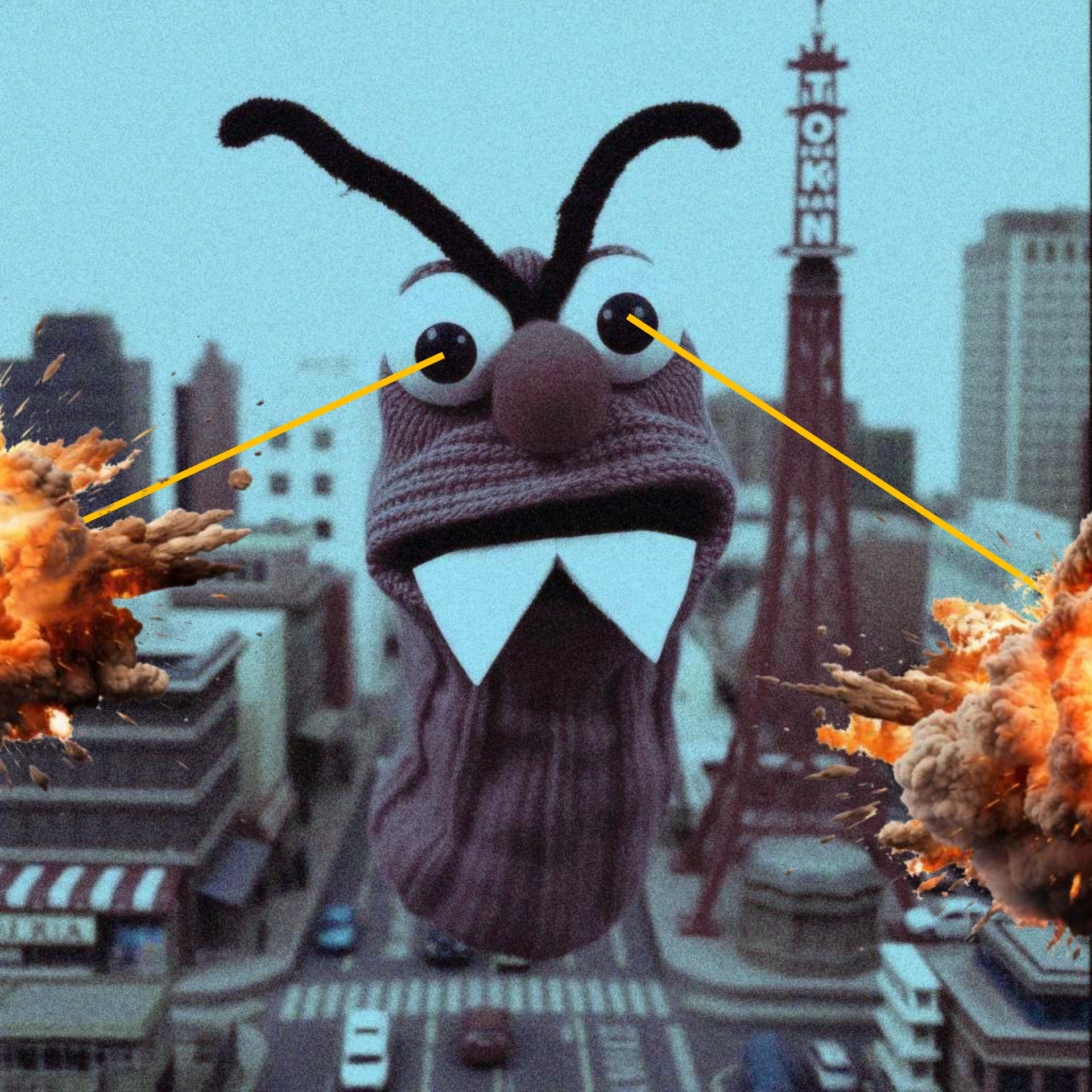
The hallway was silent, save for the faint drip of seawater from where Uncle Malcolm had stood, and the lingering scent of chlorine, now oddly mingled with something vaguely... meaty.

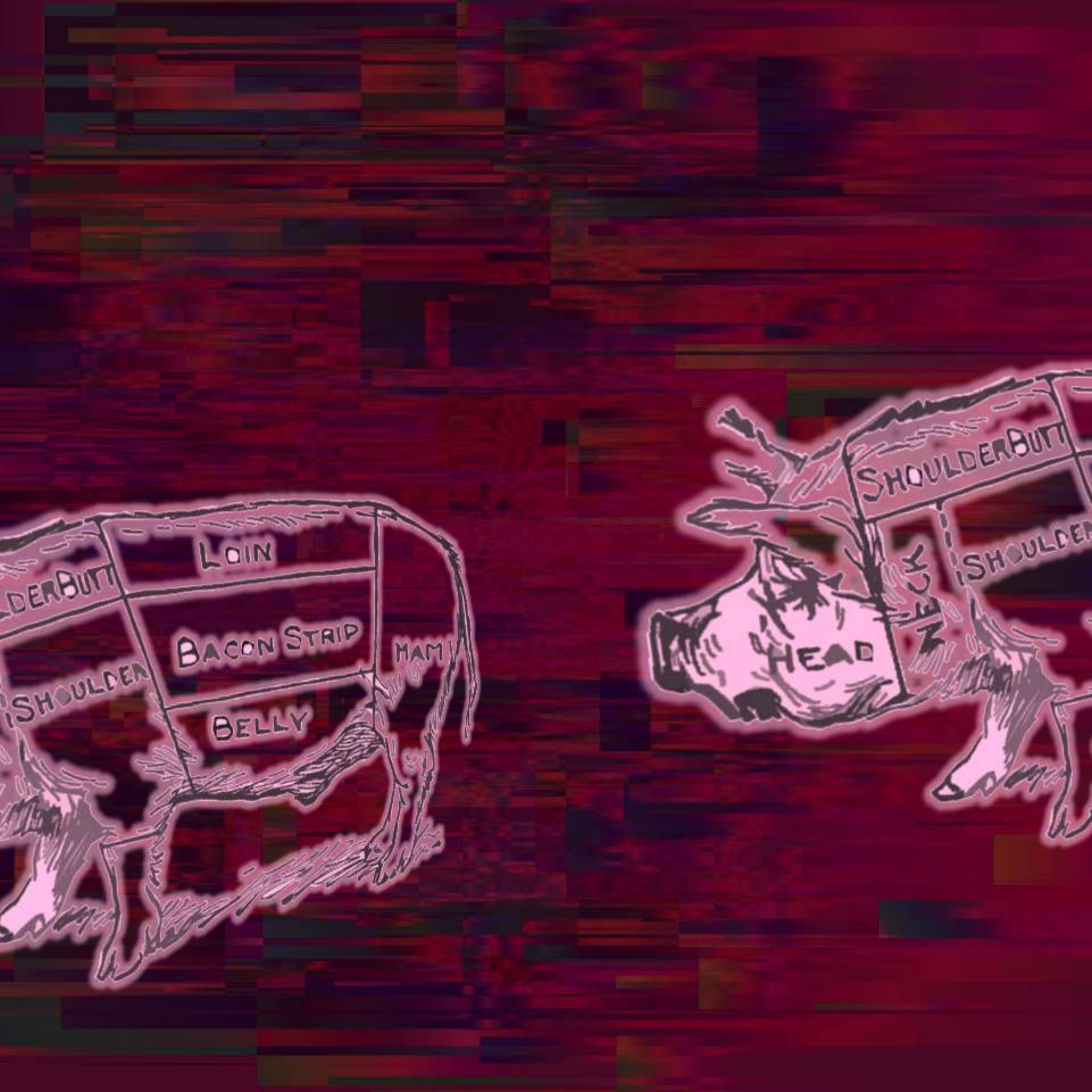
Post-Performance Reflections: A Note from the CHDS (and a Confused Professor)
Well, that certainly took an unexpected turn. The CHDS regrets to inform you that our experimental "immersive" performance of The Cutchogue Carnage concluded with an unforeseen, shall we say, epilogue. While the dramatic tension was undeniably heightened, and the audience reaction, though perhaps less "gauged" and more "viscerally traumatized," was certainly robust, we must concede that the inclusion of a live, un-tamed Phorusrhacid may have been, in retrospect, a slight miscalculation.

Prof. Aloysius "Al" Finch, whose initial manuscript forms the theoretical backbone of this endeavor, was last seen muttering something about "the inherent theatricality of the digestive process" and "a profound commentary on the ephemerality of human existence, particularly when confronted by a creature with a beak like a particularly aggressive pair of garden shears." He then attempted to classify Uncle Malcolm's demise as "a meta-narrative intervention, a deconstruction of the fourth wall, albeit one involving considerable dental work." We believe he is currently seeking solace in a particularly potent Long Island Iced Tea.

We thank you for your attendance, your patience, and your valiant efforts to maintain composure. We are, of course, now accepting applications for new "performers" for future "previews." Experience with Shakespeare is a plus; a healthy respect for large,

carnivorous birds is, effective immediately, a mandatory requirement. And perhaps, for our next production, we'll invest in a wider hallway. Or a very, very sturdy cage.




LOIN
BACON STRIP
BELLY
HAM
HEAD
NECK

CORNFLAKES AND CARCASSES

By Pink Floyd Dog Toy

The summer sun, already a thick, humid blanket, pressed down on the generic brick building of the summer school. Inside, the cafeteria's air conditioning was fighting a losing battle, a tired beast wheezing against an indifferent god. Maya, her oversized hoodie practically swallowing her, was meticulously peeling off the frosted sugar from her Frosted Flakes. The tiny white crystals, gritty between her fingers, piled on the chipped plastic tray. Liam, across from her, was drawing an elaborate, slightly disturbing, flowchart on a napkin, tracing the path from "Live Pig" to "Breakfast Sausage." His pencil moved with a frantic precision, the graphite catching the dull light.

"Seriously, who eats this stuff?" Maya mumbled, without looking up, gesturing vaguely at her cereal. The milk, already lukewarm, shimmered with an oily film.
Liam hummed, not looking up from his diagram. "It's, like, fortified with vitamins. So you don't get scurvy while reading about, like, literal scurvy." The word 'scurvy' seemed to hang in the air, a small, dark insect buzzing between them.

A few blocks away, in the chill of the hog processing facility, a cathedral built of stainless steel and regret, Mr. Henderson, Liam's neighbor, guided a hog carcass along a stainless steel rail. His hands, thick with calluses, moved with practiced efficiency. The air was a constant mist of steam and atomized blood. At home, later, his wife would ask him about his day. He'd grunt, staring at the television, where brighter, less viscous realities flickered, the faint metallic tang on his skin a familiar weight. He hadn't dreamed in years.

"Yeah, because The Jungle isn't depressing enough. Now I get to feel guilty about my breakfast." A distant, rhythmic thudding seemed to vibrate through the floor, a low, persistent pulse. She wondered if it was the school's old boiler, a simple mechanism obeying simple laws, or something else. A memory: her great-aunt Susan, always

complaining about the smell that clung to her clothes after her shift, a smell that had its own genealogy, a smell that had been in the family for generations, long before they'd even come to Smithfield. Just the way it is, her dad would say, shrugging, his hands, even after scrubbing, holding a faint, metallic scent.

"Right?" Liam finally met her eyes, a twitch in his left eyelid. "Like, you know this school is, like, five minutes from Smithfield Foods? Do you think they, like, specifically pick The Jungle for us because we're surrounded by it?" The flowchart on his napkin seemed to writhe, the arrows connecting not just processes but implications, a slow, inevitable march from flesh to product. He saw his own father, a vague figure in a white smock, moving through a haze of steam and low light, forever pulling levers, pushing carts.

Across town, Maya's dad, Robert, was overseeing the packaging line. Clear plastic sealed around glistening cuts of pork. His movements were precise, economical, his eyes scanning for any defect. His shoulders ached perpetually. At home, he sometimes forgot what day it was. The rhythmic clack of the machinery filled his head, even in silence.
"It's probably, like, a 'local immersion' thing," Maya said, rolling her eyes, but the gesture felt hollow. "Or they just ran out of copies of The Great Gatsby." She pushed a soggy flake around her bowl, the milk an opaque white. The thudding grew louder, a dull thump-thump-thump that felt less like machinery and more like a giant, irregular heartbeat. The air in the cafeteria felt thick, tasting faintly of ozone and something else, something metallic and sweet.

Room 207 (Still)

Ms. Albright, looking even more drained than usual in her light linen dress, tapped her pen against the podium. The sound was too sharp, a tiny crack in the stifling quiet. "Alright, class. Yesterday we discussed Jurgis Rudkus's initial optimism upon arriving in Packingtown. Today, we're going to delve into the reality he encounters. Chapter three. Liam, perhaps you can start us off? What are some of the first, shall we say, sensory details that confront Jurgis?"
Liam, who had been meticulously cleaning his phone screen with a corner of his t-shirt, blinked. The movement felt slow, as if his eyes were heavy with dust. "Uh... well, it smells bad, right? Like, really bad. And there's, like, blood and guts everywhere. And the

noise. Like, the pigs screaming." His voice seemed to echo oddly in the quiet room. "It's pretty intense for, like, the early 1900s." He rubbed his left eyelid. His grandfather, before the cough took him, had worked the cutting floor for forty years. He remembered the faint, sweet smell of blood in the old man's beard, even after a shower, a smell that clung like iron filings.

At the other end of town, Brenda, a senior from Maya's church, whose hands were older than her face, carefully sliced through a pig's hindquarter, separating muscle from bone with swift, practiced strokes. Her knife, honed to a razor edge, glinted under the harsh lights. Her hands often cramped at night. She thought less and less about the animal; it was simply a task, a series of precise cuts.

Ms. Albright nodded. "Indeed. The sensory overload is crucial to Sinclair's exposé. Maya, what about the conditions within the plants themselves? What surprised you, or perhaps, disgusted you?"

Maya shifted in her seat. The chair scraped, a harsh sound in the still air. "Honestly, the rat thing was pretty gross. Like, they'd eat the poisoned bread and then, like, fall into the meat. And they just... processed it anyway?" Her voice was laced with a genuine shiver. A vivid image, unbidden: a large, grey rat, its eyes like beads, its fur matted, twitching in a pile of something red and slick. Her dad, coming home, sometimes had flecks of red, almost invisible, on his forearms, near the elbow. He'd just say it was 'splash.' "That's, like, super illegal now, right?"

"That's correct, Maya," Ms. Albright confirmed, her voice oddly flat, a little thinner than before. "Those very passages were instrumental in the passage of the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906." She then turned her gaze towards the back. "Kevin, your thoughts on the working conditions, particularly the accidents described?"

Kevin, always prepared, cleared his throat. He smoothed his shirt, a nervous habit. "It's really dangerous. Like, people losing fingers, falling into vats, getting diseased. And there's no, like, compensation or anything. They just get fired if they can't work." He

paused, then looked up, a hint of genuine confusion on his face, his eyes wide. "But, like, how could people even work in places like that for so long? Like, wouldn't you just, like, quit?" The classroom seemed to pulse, the low thrum returning, a pressure in the ears. Kevin's older cousin, Mark, had worked the kill floor for six months, then just... left. No goodbye. Just gone. His mother had said he 'went north,' but no one in the family ever heard from him again.

Jason, a former classmate of Liam's who dropped out last year, leaving a vacant space in the seating chart, worked the gutting line. He stood in a constant slick of blood and offal, moving his hook with repetitive speed, pulling organs from eviscerated carcasses. His hands were always cold. He spent his evenings playing video games, the screen a dizzying escape from the fluorescent glare of the plant, the smell that permeated his very pores. Sometimes, he just stared at the wall.

A hushed silence fell over the classroom. The air thickened, carrying a faint, undeniable odor – something acrid, metallic, like hot blood and brine. Ms. Albright looked at Kevin, then out the window at the hazy summer sky, which now seemed to press down on the glass. Her voice, when it came, was softer than usual, a quiet, almost weary admission, a whisper that seemed to come from far away.

"That, Kevin, is the central question Sinclair forces us to confront. What happens when the options are so limited that even such horrific conditions become the lesser of two evils?" She sighed, then straightened, her teacher persona clicking back into place. "Let's move on to the character of Ona..."

Outside the window, a flicker. A delivery truck, a large white rectangle, passed slowly. On its side, a logo: a stylized pig, rendered in cheerful pink.

Back to the Cafeteria (Still)

"Okay, but seriously," Maya said, picking at a loose thread on her hoodie, pulling it until it snapped with a tiny ping. "The rat thing? My dad works at Smithfield. I'm going to have nightmares." She looked at her hands, the faint, lingering scent of the cereal sugar

now replaced by something else, something vaguely saline. Her great-aunt Susan's hands, always raw, the skin cracked, faintly smelling of something like lye and old metal.
Liam shuddered. He looked at his crumpled napkin, the flowchart dissolving into a grey, indecipherable smudge.
"Don't even. And Kevin's question was actually, like, super deep. Like, why don't they just quit? It's messed up."

He thought of the empty chair at his grandmother's Sunday dinners, the one that was always "for Mark."

A shift manager, Maria Rodriguez, Maya's neighbor from two streets over, a face seen daily, yet unknown, checked the temperature of a chilled room, the cold seeping into her bones. Her face was perpetually tired. She had seen too many hands mangled, too many lives broken by the relentless rhythm of the line. She just wanted to get home and sit in quiet, the hum of her own refrigerator a comfort compared to the constant roar of the factory.

"Because they'd starve, duh," Maya said, then paused. Her eyes drifted to the cafeteria door, a metal slab that looked heavy, too heavy to open easily. The fluorescent lights overhead hummed, a high, thin whine that seemed to burrow into her skull. "But also, like, how do you even get up every day and do that? Knowing that's your life?"
Liam crumpled his napkin, the paper sounding like dried skin. He pressed it into a tight ball.

"I don't know. Maybe you just... stop thinking about it? Like, you just go on autopilot. Like when you're, like, scrolling TikTok for three hours and you don't even know why anymore." The thudding had started again, closer now, a low, guttural thump-thump-thump that felt like it was coming from inside the walls, inside them.

Maya slowly nodded. Her eyes fixed on a dark, almost imperceptible stain on the linoleum floor beneath their table. It was the shape of a handprint, but too large, too splayed. "Yeah. It's like, you're still doing stuff, but your brain is just... somewhere else. Like your soul is checking out." She looked down at her cereal, the sugary flakes now

greyish, the milk opaque and still. The taste was chalky, metallic. "This whole book is, like, a major buzzkill for breakfast."

Liam pushed his bowl away. The plastic scraped. He could almost feel the vibration of the distant machinery in his teeth.

"Tell me about it. I'm gonna be looking at bacon differently for the rest of my life." He stood up, stretching. His muscles felt tight, unfamiliar. The air felt heavy, like wet flannel pressed against his face. "Ready for round three of industrial despair?" The thumping intensified, joined by a new sound, a wet, rhythmic slap-slap-slap.

Maya let out a dry laugh. "Born ready. Or, like, born numb. Whatever." She stood too, her legs feeling stiff. The ceiling tiles above them seemed to sag, tiny dark spots blooming at their edges. The fluorescent lights flickered once, briefly plunging the cafeteria into a sickly half-light before surging back, too bright, too stark. The metallic tang in the air was stronger now, mixed with a deeper, richer smell, something like hot blood and singed hair. The slap-slap-slap intensified, growing closer, echoing down the hall from somewhere beyond the kitchen.

And then, a new sound cut through the thudding and the slapping. A high-pitched squeal, like tearing metal, then another, prolonged and desperate, quickly cut short, followed by a wet, guttural choke. It was unmistakably the sound of a pig. Not a recorded sound from a video, but real, visceral, and terrifyingly close. It seemed to come from inside the building, reverberating through the cafeteria's thin walls, shaking the very floor beneath them.

Liam froze. His eyes snapped to the double doors leading to the kitchen, beyond which lay the delivery entrance, and then, only minutes away, the vast, humming complex of Smithfield Foods. The air now tasted purely of iron. His mind, for a fleeting moment, saw the intricate lines of his morning flowchart, now no longer an abstract diagram, but a horrifying, living process playing out around them. He saw the path from "Live Pig" to "Breakfast Sausage," and suddenly, he understood that the diagram was not just on the napkin, but in the walls, in the air, in the very ground they stood on. The claustrophobia

was absolute. He felt the cold, hard press of bone against his own skin, the slickness of fat, the raw tearing of muscle.

The squeal came again, fainter this time, like a dying echo, but it was enough.
Liam's eyes darted around the cafeteria. The single exit door. The windows, too high, too small. His breath hitched. A primal, instinctual jolt shot through him, bypassing thought, bypassing context, bypassing all the layers of irony and detachment he usually wore. He didn't think about The Jungle or Jurgis. He thought only of the sound, the smell, the sudden, horrifying proximity of it all. His pupils dilated. The flickering fluorescents became a strobe, the walls leaned in, the air was a thick, suffocating blanket of pig and fear.

With a sudden, almost violent lurch, Liam shoved his chair backward, sending it skidding across the linoleum with a piercing shriek. He didn't run towards the doors. He didn't even yell. He simply slammed his palms flat onto the table, his knuckles white, and with a guttural, desperate cry, he flipped the entire table over. Cereal bowls, milk cartons, crumpled napkins, all went flying in a chaotic, sugary explosion. The metal legs of the table hit the floor with a deafening clang that momentarily drowned out the persistent, awful sounds from beyond the kitchen. It was an act of pure, unthinking, unadulterated terror, a desperate attempt to break something, anything, in a world that had suddenly become too small, too real, too much.

CLUSK
BYY7
Lil. Canting

Of Malice & Mallards

By Logie Nipkow

Right then. The moon's a sliver, the city's hushed,
And there's a certain quiet truth in the air.
A truth best whispered,
Perhaps, with a glass in hand,
Just as the last echoes of the day fade
Into the lonely hum of the streetlights.

Now repeat after me:

I shall not kill a duck.
I shall not harm a duck in any way.
I shall not pinch its beak, nor pluck its tail,
Nor feed it bombs within a pail.
No, not a feather, not a quack,
Shall suffer from my vile attack.
For ducks, though quacking, waddling, green,
Are part of nature's grand machine!

Unless, of course, the duck, you see,
Should happen to be eyeing me
With malice in its beady eye,
As if it planned to make me cry,
Or steal my hat, or pinch my nose,
Or scatter custard on my clothes.
For then, dear chaps, the rules do bend,
And self-defense, my friend, my friend,
Demands a certain... spirited reply!

Perhaps a well-aimed custard pie!
Or a polite, yet firm, suggestion
That it desist from such digression!

Good heavens! It's a militant mallard!
It's got my monocle!
Quickly, Eccles, fetch the giant marmalade cannon!
This is no ordinary fowl play!
This is... international waterfowl espionage!
They're after the secret plans for the invisible crumpet!
Run, Bluebottle, run! Don't look back!
They'll turn you into a feather boa! The humanity!
The ornithological outrage!
That's CUSTARD for you, you deceitful web-footed gremlin!
Always running my bath and leaving the door open for your friends!
Tell them I've got a pie for each of them!
Oh, dear Lord, this has gone too far!

L'Abîme Scintillant

par Jean D'Amours

« Écoute, ô dame aux soupirs salés,
Ton thé noir de douleur infuse dans cette marmite de fer,
macérant au rythme qui défie le dernier battement du métronome –
avant que la main fissurée du vieil homme,
comme la terre craquelée,
ne verse l'hymne ambré de Molson
sur la terre.
Son rêve, désormais à ta gouverne –
de crainte que sa langue ne transforme ton nom en poussière.
La tempête n'a pas frappé par le rugissement du tonnerre,
mais comme un psaume étincelant –
mille aiguilles piquant
le ciel cramoisi blessé de Charlottetown,
donnant naissance à un monolithe de lumière,
suspendu par la corde divine d'Apollon –
une berceuse fredonnée entre griffes statiques
et chœurs d'antan oubliés.
Le son, inaudible mais ressenti,
vibrant dans les côtes,
chant funéraire d'un psalmiste.
Dans cette grange devenue cathédrale d'ozone et de rose synthétique,
les pétales dissous dans l'éther,
se tenait une silhouette –
un visage sculpté de clair-obscur,
ombre et révélation enchevêtrées.

Devant lui, des écrans vacillaient –
présages :
la peau d'une banane passant de l'or à la pourriture en un éclair,
une femme de porcelaine de Sèvres brisée
laissant couler des larmes irisées,
comme des ailes de libellule.
Un écran murmura :
« Les tasses cassées recèlent plus de vérité que les miroirs ;
les chambres d'écho engendrent des fantômes. »
Un enfant indésirable entra –
un héraut, comme tout présage –
avec la crinière de son destrier plastique,
une ruche rose de rats.
L'air se chargea de la fantasie de Madeleine –
un souvenir sucré et maladif qui n'était pas sien :
« Une morsure déploie mille après-midis,
chaque pétale, un moment à moitié souvenu, à moitié inventé. »
Elle sourit –
une aube avant l'aube –
et offrit son cheval en plastique,
son cœur battant de synthétique,
au bourdonnement du monolithe.
Puis, la véritable musique :
pas les violons de l'île, mais des magnétophones déliant
des tempêtes orchestrales.
Les cordes balançaient comme des algues dans le courant du Styx ;
un accordéon soupira la plainte de Noé.
De l'obélisque étincelant,
une voix –
claire comme la vérité (真理),
mais voilée dans le brouillard numérique (数字迷雾) –
déclama :

« L’avenir est un cocktail de regrets et de paillettes –
secouez bien, servez sec. »
La grange gémit,
ses os de fer tremblaient sous le regard du monolithe.
Sur l’écran, la femme dansait –
marionnette d’angles et d’axiomes,
sa robe en filet de pêche (鱗化)
se transformant en écailles,
chaque œil observant la tempête.
L’enfant pointa –
une aiguille de boussole –
« Ces écrans ne sont que des miroirs ;
la vérité se plie dans la lumière qui pense. »
La musique changea –
un battement krautrock propulsant la machine de l’univers.
« Les fleurs en plastique fleurissent pour les aveugles ;
la lumière grise ne nourrit que des ombres. »
Le monolithe descendit –
pas en chute, mais en condensation –
son éclat comme une étoile liquide.
L’air embaumait l’ozone et des secrets indicibles.
La silhouette leva une main –
un signe de reconnaissance.
La femme continua de danser ;
l’enfant rit –
un son aigu fendit le vide.
Puis, tout se tut –
la vérité scintillante –
pas sur le sol,
mais au cœur du cortex,
réécrivant la carte de l’esprit.
La tempête disparut,

mais la lumière perdura,
gravée dans la rétine –
une vision hérétique.
L'île, n'étant plus simplement une île,
but un palimpseste –
hanté par le silence du cheval de Troie :
Quels spectres portes-tu,
pour donner naissance à une telle lumière ?»

The Glimmering Abyss

translated by Jack Campbell

Listen! Fair lady of salty sighs,
Your black tea of sorrow
brews in this iron kettle,
steeping at a rhythm
that defies the last tick-tock of the metronome –
before the old man's cracked hand,
like cracked earth,
spills Molson's amber hymn
on the ground.
His dream, now yours to steer–
lest his tongue turns your name to dust.
The storm struck not with thunder's roar,
but like a shimmering psalm–
a thousand needle pricks stitching
Charlottetown's wounded crimson sky,
giving birth to a monolith of light,
hanging by Apollo's divine string–
a lullaby humming between static claws
and long-lost choirs.
The sound, unheard but felt,
vibrated in the ribs,
the funeral song of a psalmist.
In this barn-turned-cathedral of ozone and synthetic rose,
petals dissolved into ether,
a figure stood–
a face carved from chiaroscuro,
shadow and revelation intertwined.
Before him flickered screens–

portents:
a banana's skin shifting from gold to rot in seconds,
a porcelain woman of broken Sèvres
shedding iridescent tears,
like dragonfly wings.
One screen whispered:
"Cracked teacups hold more truth than mirrors;
echo chambers breed ghosts."
An uninvited child entered—
a herald, as all omens are—
with his plastic steed's mane,
a pink hive of rats.
The air thickened with Madeleine's fantasy—
a sickly sweet remembrance that was not her own:
"A bite unfolds a thousand afternoons,
each petal a half-remembered, half-invented moment."
She smiled—
a dawn before dawn—
and offered her plastic horse,
her beating heart of synthetic plastic,
to the hum of the monolith.
Then, true music:
not island violins, but tape decks unraveling
orchestral storms.
Strings swayed like algae in Styx's current;
an accordion sighed Noah's lament.
From the shimmering obelisk,
a voice—
clear as truth (真理),
yet veiled in digital fog (数字迷雾)—
proclaimed:
"The future's a cocktail of regrets and glitter—

shake well, serve dry.”
The barn groaned,
its iron bones trembling under the gaze of the monolith.
On the screen, the woman danced–
puppet of angles and axioms,
her fishing-net dress (鱗化)
turning into scales,
each eye watching the storm.
The child pointed–
a compass needle–
“These screens are only mirrors;
truth bends in the light that thinks.”
The music shifted–
a krautrock pulse driving the universe’s engine.
“Plastic flowers bloom for the blind;
gray light feeds only shadows.”
The monolith descended–
not falling, but condensing–
its glow like a liquid star.
The air tasted of ozone and unspeakable secrets.
The figure lifted a hand–
a sign of recognition.
The woman kept dancing;
the child laughed–
a sharp sound cleaving the void.
And then, it settled–
the shimmering truth–
not on the ground,
but within the cortex,
rewriting the map of the mind.
The storm vanished,
yet the light endured,

etched onto retinas–
a heretic's vision.
The island, no longer just an island,
but a palimpsest–
haunted by the silent challenge of the Trojan hearse:
What specters do you harbor,
to give birth to such light?

Notes on Style:

- Juxtapositions, absurd images, and surreal contrasts evoke the Beat spirit.
- Synesthetic and mythic language builds a layered, dreamlike landscape.
- Fragmented aphorisms and linguistic play pay homage to Celan, Joyce, and others.
- Irony and fatalism echo Cohen and Coward's tone.

This is a labyrinth of language—each phrase both map and minotaur—inviting you to wander and wonder. Funny how D'Amours worked from 1958 until his death in 1981 in Evangeline Region (Région Évangéline) as a carpenter and how few knew of his poetry. Only one small collection, published in 1979 by Les Cahiers d'Enghien 32, Rue des Saules 93800 Épinay-sur-Seine (Seine-Saint-Denis - Au nord-ouest de Paris) appeared in his lifetime, to little attention.

ZWÖLF

THE LEGEND OF TWELVE: A GOLDEN ENIGMA

By Dmitri X. Pearwood

"The ocean's just Mother Earth's saliva, y'know? We're all swimmin' in divine spit, and that's why thunderstorms taste like pennies if you open your mouth to the sky." —Darlene Marchwood, retired acupuncturist and self-proclaimed "atmospheric taste specialist" who reads weather patterns from her 1974 Airstream parked permanently at the Daytona Beach KOA

The plumber's putty tablet—its surface both ancient and newborn, neither solid nor liquid but existing in that liminal space where matter dreams of transformation—glows under the merciless interrogation of fluorescent lights, each buzz of electricity a miniature confession of modern despair, while elsewhere in the province, perhaps in those very moments (for time, as we understand it, is merely a convenient fiction designed to prevent everything from happening at once), a television set broadcasts its blue-tinged prophecies into a dining room where roast beef congeals on Sunday china, potatoes slump into gravy lakes, and two diners sit in unconscious anticipation of the cosmic event about to render their domesticity into sublime catastrophe.

"The problem with small press," Zwölf drawls, long fingers splayed across the K-car's steering wheel, "is everybody thinks it's a steppin' stone. She ain't. She's her own darn continent."

"I would posit," Frank replies, his transatlantic vowels crisp as fresh banknotes, "that the true value of independent publishing lies precisely in its rejection of commerciality as

the primary metric of success. The marketplace rewards homogeneity; the small press cultivates the gloriously aberrant."

"Ayuh." agrees the Yankee expat. "Like them Dadaists but without all the fancy European coffee shops."

The eclipse strikes! Shadows consume light in celestial dance! And in that mystic darkness the woman's posterior—that landscape of flesh heretofore constrained by social convention and fabric limitations—receives its strange awakening, its cellular structures suddenly comprehending some greater purpose as they begin their inexorable expansion, first filling the chair (an heirloom piece, oak-framed with burgundy upholstery worn thin at the arms where generations had rested), then spreading with the determination of rising dough, infiltrating every architectural negative space: chair legs, cabinet corners, the narrow gap between refrigerator and wall where lost magnets and forgotten recipes had gathered dust for seventeen years, until finally—inevitably—the couple themselves become incorporated into this new flesh geography, compressed into the very architecture of their own quotidian tragedy.

"Consider the cassette," Frank offers, holding a copy of the Cresta album by The Hollow Men delicately between manicured fingers. "Inferior sound quality by objective standards, yet the physicality of the object—the tangible connection between creator and consumer—offers something the digital realm cannot replicate."

"Digital's just ghosts in machines," Zwölf counters, tapping ash from an unfiltered cigarette. "Give me somethin' I can hold. Somethin' that degrades with love."

Do aristocrats eat oyster crackers with their bisque? Do they crumble saltines into consommé while discussing hedge funds and horse lineages? The question floats unanswered through Canadian airwaves, a koan without solution, much like the mystery of the golden figure who now enters the narrative frame as if stepping from one dimension into another.

Through Sam the Record Man he strides, this magnificent, liminal space, gold suit catching fluorescent light and transforming it into something richer, more profound—Panama hat tilted at precisely the angle where insouciance meets calculation, dark spectacles reflecting a world he observes but does not entirely inhabit. Behind him waddles faithful constancy, blue-suited and round, transatlantic vowels polished to mirrors, moving through space with the imperturbable gravity of a minor planet. They navigate the vinyl cosmos together, past astronomical arrangements of records, cassettes, posters, past the yellowing cardboard standees of forgotten pop stars frozen in their moment of fame, past the listening stations where teenagers press greasy headphones to unwashed hair, past glass counters containing guitar picks, capos, drumsticks, resin, valve oil, metronomes, tuning forks, all the sacred implements of musical devotion. It is 1993, and the air hums with the last gasp of analog before the digital tide.

"I'm thinkin' about manifestos," Zwölf says over late-night coffee in a Bangor diner. "All them art movements had 'em. Maybe *Huzzah!* needs one."

"Perhaps," Frank replies, stirring precisely one and a quarter teaspoons of sugar into his cup, "but the contemporary manifesto must acknowledge its own provisional nature. We live in the post-everything era. Grand narratives collapse under their own weight."

"So we write a collapsible manifesto. One that folds up neat in your pocket."

The golden one's Maine drawl—rough as barnacled pier posts yet somehow musical as foghorns across morning harbor—cuts through muzak renditions of last season's hits: "This will be good in the car." The cassette—Cresta by The Hollow Men—dangles between his bejeweled fingers, its plastic case catching light in prismatic celebration. What sonic prophecies does it contain? What hollow revelations await?

"I've been contemplating the ontology of zines," Frank says, organizing layout materials with geometric precision. "They exist in opposition to mass media yet inevitably comment upon it. A parasitic relationship, perhaps, but one where the parasite evolves more rapidly than the host."

"Less thinkin', more staplin'," Zwölf grunts, yet his eyes behind dark lenses sparkle with intellectual engagement.

"Do you have any...*hit*?" whispers the clerk, eyes darting toward imagined surveillance cameras, toward undercover officers potentially lurking in World Music, toward the manager's office with its perpetually half-closed door.

"Nah. Just flu caps." The golden one dismisses with magnificent certainty, each word a complete universe, a judgment rendered without appeal. The clerk retreats, shoulders slumped in pharmaceutical disappointment.

"My dear dolphins formed a militia and started challenging beach bums to pistol duels at sunrise. Had to release 'em back to the wild after they cornered three surfers behind the pier with pearl-handled revolvers. Those cetaceans have terrible trigger discipline but impeccable aim. The local lifeguards had to establish a demilitarized zone between species." –Captain Milo "Barnacle" Jennings, operator of "Psychic Dolphin Sunset Tours" from a questionable vessel moored behind the Daytona Beach Wendy's parking lot

Outside, the chariot awaits–a K-car gleaming two-tone glory–gold and silver like alchemical elements in perfect balance, like sun and moon captured in Detroit steel and vinyl. Its radio antenna vibrates slightly in the coastal breeze, receiving signals perhaps not entirely of this earth. The cassette player waits, throat open for plastic communion.

"What separates art from artifact?" Frank asks, adjusting his bow tie while Zwölf photographs a man on Daytona Beach who claims to be constructing a functional time machine from discarded beer cans and dental floss.

"Intent," Zwölf replies without hesitation. "And maybe time. Enough time passes, everything becomes either art or garbage. No Mistuh Middle Man."

"And our publication? Art or garbage?"

"Both. That's the whole darn point."

The magazine itself, *Huzzah!*, defies conventional categorization. Each issue runs exactly thirty-six pages—"the perfect length," according to Zwölf, "for maximum impact with minimum paper waste." The cover always features a hand-drawn illustration in red ink on cream-colored card stock, typically depicting some improbable scene: a lighthouse transforming into a rocket ship, a moose wearing Victorian formal wear, a telephone booth submerged in a marsh with tentacles emerging from the receiver. The masthead changes font with each issue, as if the very identity of the publication remains in constant flux.

Inside, the content follows no discernible pattern except its commitment to the strange and marginalized. Regular features include "Roadside Prophets" (interviews with eccentric individuals encountered during their travels), "Ephemeral Archeology" (photographs of odd objects found in thrift stores, abandoned buildings, and dumpsters), "Mistranslated Cinema" (reviews of foreign films based entirely on their posters, without watching the actual movies), and "Invisible Cartography" (maps of places that don't exist or exist only in subjective experience).

Between these recurring segments sprawl poems shaped like household appliances, short stories that begin mid-sentence and end with cooking recipes, collages made from medical textbooks and vintage lingerie catalogs, manifestos for art movements that existed for a single afternoon, transcripts of overheard conversations in laundromats, and detailed illustrations of impossible machines designed to solve problems nobody has.

The colophon always reads: "Produced with stolen time, borrowed equipment, and the indulgence of strangers. No rights reserved. Reproduction encouraged but attribution appreciated. If you paid more than $3 for this, you've been swindled."

Kinko's, 8:17 AM. The fluorescent lights pulse with merciless regularity over the scene: Frank meticulously arranging pages on the photocopier glass while Zwölf, vibrating with the combined effects of sleep deprivation and chemical stimulation, explains his theory of transdimensional consciousness to a middle-aged woman who came in to make copies of her church newsletter.

"See, the brain's just a receiver, pickin' up signals from the cosmic background radiation. That's why we dream—it's interference patterns from parallel realities!" His gold suit, wrinkled from the night's labors, catches the harsh light as he gesticulates wildly, Panama hat askew, dark glasses unable to conceal the manic energy in his eyes.

The woman clutches her original closer to her chest, nodding politely while inching toward the self-service machines on the far wall.

"Your stapler technology is inadequate!" Zwölf suddenly announces to the bleary-eyed clerk. "These are not soul-worthy staples! They lack commitment to the page!"

Frank, unperturbed by his partner's performance, continues the delicate work of alignment and reproduction, occasionally sipping from a can of Jolt Cola—his fifth of the morning—with the precise movements of a surgeon handling instruments.

The K-car carries them north, back across borders. The endless ribbon of I-95 unspooled before them, past forests that whispered forgotten secrets and diner signs glowing like beacons in the predawn. This time to the University of Prince Edward Island. The student resource center becomes their temporary atelier, the night watchman looking the other way in exchange for a copy of each issue and occasional Cokes. Here, in the off-hours, they collate and fold, the rhythm of their work punctuated by Frank's observations on the materiality of publication.

"The democratic potential of academia's resources," he notes, "lies precisely in their accessibility during hours when the institutional gaze is averted."

"Universities hoard the best paper," Zwölf agrees, his hands moving with surprising dexterity through the assembly process. "Thick stock. Archival quality. Our words'll outlast the Vatican on this stuff."

Three weeks later, they migrate to an arts co-op in Auburn, Maine—a converted textile mill with high ceilings and exposed brick walls, where other creative misfits construct sculptures from industrial waste, compose atonal music for instruments they've

invented, and stage experimental theater performances for audiences consisting primarily of each other. The drive was a blur of roadside diners, their menus heavy with local seafood, and stretches of highway where the only company was the occasional logging truck.

"The community aspect of publication," Frank observes while threading ribbon through punched holes, "creates a temporary autonomous zone where conventional economic relationships are suspended in favor of gift economies and mutual aid."

"Nyawwwwp," Zwölf replies, less eloquent after forty-eight hours without sleep, "we're all just birds buildin' weird nests from whatever shiny stuff we find."

By winter, they've established temporary headquarters in Montreal—a former funeral parlor with most windows intact and a miraculously functioning radiator in the main room. Local art students drift in and out, contributing illustrations, translation services, and occasional financial support in exchange for the glamour of association with these strange nomadic publishers. The journey north felt like a passage into another realm, the landscape shifting from coastal pine to snow-dusted mountains, the air growing crisp with the promise of true winter.

"The geographical trajectory of independent publishing," Frank says, his breath visible in the cold air as he adjusts the ancient mimeograph machine they've salvaged from a monastery closure, "mirrors the migratory patterns of artistic movements throughout history—following not only economic opportunity but climates of intellectual hospitality."

"We're like them geese," Zwölf explains to a young photography student who's wandered in looking for a rumored party, "except we're flyin' backward and sideways at the same time."

They drive from Charlottetown's island sanctuary, across provinces, across states, the landscape blurring past windows—birch forests, potato fields, fishing villages, gas stations, roadside motels with vacancy signs flickering like uncertain stars, diners

advertising homemade pie, provincial parks, abandoned factories, suburbs expanding like cultivated mold, outlet malls constructed with deliberate forgettability, all the accumulated architecture of human restlessness and commerce. Each mile was a canvas of fading autumn colors, then stark winter white, the K-car a tiny, determined dot against the vast, indifferent landscape.

"The photocopier," Frank observes as they wait for their latest issue to reproduce, "democratized publishing in ways the printing press never quite achieved. Gutenberg required capital investment; Xerox requires only access and electricity."

"And good credit at the copy shop," Zwölf adds, counting coins for the machine. "Revolution's always gotta pay rent somehow."

By night, they arrange consumables on Publix shelves with ritualistic precision—canned vegetables, breakfast cereals in order of sugar content, condiments arranged by viscosity, paper products stacked in architectural challenge to gravity—while fluorescent lights buzz overhead like electric insects and muzak plays diluted versions of songs that once moved teenagers to tears and rebellion.

Each shelf contains:
Dust particles visible only in certain light.
Fingerprints of stockers who came before.
The invisible residue of handling from farm to factory to truck to warehouse to store.
Microscopic fibers from the clothed bodies of shoppers who reached, considered, replaced.
Pricing labels with adhesive slowly crystallizing at the edges.
Minute scratches from the passage of products sliding across surfaces.
The accumulated breath molecules of every person who has exhaled nearby.

"I'm not convinced posterity exists anymore," Frank says, methodically arranging soup cans. "The contemporary archive is so vast, yet simultaneously ephemeral. Digital degradation, physical deterioration—perhaps obscurity is the natural state of all creative endeavors."

"That's why we print on paper," Zwölf responds, shelving boxes with surprising delicacy. "Paper remembers longer than hard drives. Besides, I like the idea of some kid findin' our zine in a box twenty years from now and thinkin' we were onto somethin'."

By day, they hunt Daytona's beaches for oddities, for the magnificent detritus of humanity—the sunburned philosopher explaining consciousness to uninterested seagulls, the elderly couple who have synchronized their swimming routine over sixty-seven years of marriage, the child who builds sand castles with architectural precision beyond her years, the tattoo artist whose body tells seventeen contradictory stories, the ice cream vendor who recites Yeats when business is slow.

Their creation emerges through mechanical incantation: *Huzzah!* The Smith Corona hammers manifesto through daisy wheel fonts, each letter an individual decision, typography shifting mid-sentence like weather patterns or mood swings. Red ink bleeds onto recycled stock like sunset reflected in tide pools. Chinese-patterned ribbon—dragons chasing pearls, clouds transforming into birds—stitches the spine with ancient symbols, binding disparate realities into a single physical object that contains multitudes.

"The aesthetics of imperfection," Frank pronounces, examining a slightly askew page, "constitute the authentic signature of the independent press. Mass production eliminates variation; we elevate it."

"Wonky staples got soul," Zwölf agrees, adjusting his Panama hat. "Perfect binding's for cowards."

Each issue contains:
Dog-eared corners from readers turning pages too eagerly.
Coffee ring stains forming accidental mandalas.
Marginalia in different handwritings—agreements, arguments, phone numbers, grocery lists.
Pressed flowers, ticket stubs, guitar picks used as bookmarks.
The occasional eyelash, fallen unnoticed.

Scent molecules from the hands that held it.
Creases where it was folded to fit in back pockets.

Now: Bangor air thick with grief and memory. Blue Suit exists only as ash, confined in ornate vessel (purchased at an antique store in Portland that smelled of camphor and forgotten perfumes, owned by a woman who claimed distant relation to Longfellow). Gold Suit cradles this transformation of matter against chest, journeys toward island beginning, understanding that all circles complete themselves eventually, that all journeys are ultimately return.

The ferry cuts through harbor waters, leaving momentary wound in surface tension. Somewhere beyond sight, the plumber's putty tablet continues its silent testimony. The golden figure stands at the rail, Panama hat defiant against maritime winds, dark spectacles reflecting nothing but the infinite darkness of the ocean at night, while inside his gold-lined pocket, the cassette waits for resurrection, for the moment when hollow men will sing again through magnetic tape and mechanical translation.

"The true legacy of a small press," Frank had once said during their final conversation, "isn't measured in copies sold or reviews garnered. It's in the momentary communities created—the brief, beautiful connections between creator and reader."

"Ayuh," Zwölf had replied, uncharacteristically solemn. "We're just throwin' bottles into the ocean with weird little notes inside. Can't control who finds 'em or what they make of 'em. That's the beauty part."

The legend continues, inscribed in putty, in ash, in recycled paper, in the collective memory of those strange enough to understand that behind every ordinary Sunday dinner lurks the potential for cosmic catastrophe, behind every record store encounter hides mythological significance, behind every two-tone K-car rumbles the machinery of fate itself.

"Listen here—the aliens didn't abduct me to probe my body; they abducted me to borrow my recipe for key lime pie. They've been monitoring our baking frequencies since 1962

and apparently I'm the only one who gets the crust-to-filling ratio mathematically perfect. They return every third Tuesday for dessert consultations. Last week we worked on meringues." —Esther "Stardust" Perlmutter, 87-year-old retired mathematics teacher who operates "Cosmic Confections" from her beach-adjacent condominium and has seventeen cats all named after states of the Union.

The Weight of Gold and Ash

BY ZWÖLF

The ferry cuts, a fading incision on the flat, frozen
face of the Penobscot,
a grim gray glide, carrying my grief, a grinding, guttural ache.
Blue Suit, my old, bold brother, now mere ash,
a fine, fleeting dust in this fancy, filigreed urn.
Franky, my friend, my Frank,
faded, fallen, finally finished.
Cancer crept, consumed his core,
caged him in a common bed.
Poverty a pit, a permanent predicament,
after children, his charming cherubs, caught in court,
claimed by cold province, a crushing custody curse.
No more crisp canticles, no careful critiques,
no conversations on cassettes, just cavernous quiet.
I cradle this cold container, cracked with care,
his final form, a futile furnace.
The K-car, king of chrome, coils, covered,
a monument to movement, to miles we'd made.
Now just dirt and damp, the deer-dotted dark of Down East.
This Maine mist, a melancholy mantle.
My Panama hat, perched precariously,
a paltry pretense of former panache.
Dark lenses, dull now, mirror only black water,
the biting, bleak blankness.
The plumber's putty, a pliable past,
still glowing, I guess, somewhere. Still dreaming.

But what dreams now, when the dreamer's dust?
My pocket holds Cresta, the cassette,
its plastic shell, a fragile, faint hope,
for hollow men to howl, to haunt these harbors,
to echo, eternally, Frank's elegant, earthly voice.
We were wild wanderers, weaving wonders,
now I'm a lone lurker, lumbering on,
lost in this long lament, longing for light.
Just throwing bottles, broken by loss,
into oceans of oblivion.
The beauty part? It’s gone, gone, gone.

Fog

By Candice Roswell

– for Edi Shukriu

In the cupboard, the oyster waits–
not for pearls, but for lessons to dissolve–
the love taped to the balcony rails,
a fragile manifesto against the fog.

Real leader, they said,
but much fog clings to his breath,
embodying impulse like Agron of Illyria–
not in armor, but in glass eyes,
rolling like billiards balls in a dim-lit room,
reflecting fractured truths.

Psychological warfare is a quiet retreat–
not from enemy lines, but from the gentrified jungle
where concrete vines choke the wild.
Here, love is a tape stretched thin,
balcony to balcony,
fragile as the oyster's shell,
waiting for something–
an impulse, a lesson,
or the echo of a name
forgotten in fog.

The Anachronistic Fishing Fête of Vidalia Medallion

By Spike Glascow

Listen up, 'cause this ain't your ordinary tale. It's the lowdown on Vidalia Medallion, a tiny thing with a backpack that hummed with the kinda jazz that makes you think about the world and scratch your head at the same time. This kid, see, she was in Corvallis, Oregon, where the Willamette River—that liquid snake charmer—coiled up like a dame's curls on a rainy night. Vidalia? She was a non-sequitur, a two-bit mystery wrapped in a bow. Her cat, Peg, a feline with a permanent beef against the whole shebang, popped her head outta that pack.

"This whole shebang," Peg rasped, soundin' like a broken phonograph needle, "lacks the official blessin' of a proper, upstandin' feline organization." And with that, she was out the door, a blur of indignant fluff, swattin' at a danglin' fern.

Inside that bottomless knapsack, there was a concise one-volume encyclopedia (thin as a paper doll's regrets), a can of Sterno, a fry pan, some firecrackers that dreamed of explosions, a megaphone with sparkly stickers winkin' like cynical stars, and a can of tuna. They weren't just hangin' out, see, they were in some kinda bad harmony, a wrong note in a great arrangement.

Vidalia, with the focus of a dame lookin' at a gangster, took a rock and whapped it through a classroom window. The glass, for a moment, sang a surprised note, and then, like a sign from the gods, a dotty professor, his fishin' hat bristlin' with hooks like forgotten ideas, or maybe unexamined anxieties, did a flyin' exit. He used a knotted curtain, a theatrical plunge, a real circus act.

"Non più andrai!" he bellowed, the very air vibratin' with operatic defiance! “No more shall you roam!” He and Vidalia, now packin' rods that conjured themselves outta thin air, they just melted into the scenery.

Their destination? A fishin' spot where the water whispered secrets to the reeds, secrets more like the texture of forgotten possibilities. They found a whole crowd of weirdoes gathered. There was Fifi, a French sous chef, round as a happy macaron, and her scent filled the air with butter and possibility. Then came Yehenew, an Ethiopian keyboardist who navigated the city streets in his taxi, his movements fluid as a jazz melody. Then, as though pulled by the current, was Dot, a three-foot-tall crossin' guard, her cigar smoke coilin' like an ancient, dissatisfied spirit, her voice a rumble from the very earth’s core.

The university Dean, a doll whose presence could rearrange the stars, appeared, hands on her hips, a posture that could level mountains or rearrange constellations. She aimed a finger.

“Did you,” she asked, her voice a practiced blend of authority and amusement, “forget my fishin' pole?” The Professor, the self-appointed impresario of serendipity, protested, “You always keep your little Ugly Stick under the log over there so you can grab some bugs and worms!”

Peg, that cat, let out a howl of complaint, her eyes, those green orbs of pure interest, starin' at the bucket of fish. "I oughta have all the fish!" she declared, every meow, every guttural vibration, a feline manifesto. Dot bellowed, "Quiet now! Don’t scare off the fish!"

Yehenew, with a quiet grace, used a drop line, and, to the shock of everyone, he reeled in the biggest fish. His bait? Mandarin orange slices, tiny, luminous suns. He sang a soft,

melodic tune to his grandest catch yet, a deep-bellied leviathan, a fish-god of the Willamette, then, with a gentle hand, returned it to the water. Their stunned silence of incomprehension hung in the air. His words were a small, profound truth, a microcosm of cosmic wisdom: “He’s a great grandfather and is looked up to by his school of fish. They need him for advice and discipline.”

Then, in walked Mrs. Grayson, a vision in sensible shoes, pushin' Snuggles, her python, in a pram. "Have you seen the giant Neapolitan ice cream bar monolith that is sentient?" she asked, like it was a normal Monday. Everyone shook their heads, and as she floated off, a spectral confection of polite inquiry, Dot rumbled, "Coast is clear, Darren."

From behind a blueberry bush, with a rustle that was a disruption in the fabric of reality, emerged Darren, the giant Neapolitan ice cream bar monolith. His layers of pink, white, and brown shimmered. "It's really unfortunate Mrs. Grayson has a crush on me," Darren sighed, his voice a baritone of existential confection, "she’s fixated, and I’m just not her type." "Ever since Mr. Grayson died," the Professor said with a touch of melancholy.

Peg, always the pragmatist, said, "I oughta have all the fish." In a moment of audacious benevolence, a small fishin' rod materialized for Peg, then another for Darren. The universe, in its infinite wisdom (or perhaps, its exquisite capacity for the absurd), had chosen to re-equip its most unlikely anglers.

And so, they sat, a tableau of beautiful incongruity, a livin', breathin' installation of post-modern humanism, castin' their lines into the water. The Dean, the Professor, Fifi, Yehenew, Dot, Vidalia, Peg, and Darren. Everyone from a different walk of life, but united by the simple act of waitin', of hopin' for a bite.

The only sounds were the soft swoosh of lines, the plunk of sinkers, tiny punctuation marks in the silence. No one questioned the giant ice cream bar holdin' a fishin' rod, nor the cat with an innate, theological sense of entitlement to all aquatic life. Under that Corvallis sky, where the air shimmered with possibility, “the rank is but the guinea’s stamp; the man’s the gowd for a’ that,” and even a sentient dessert had his place.

When the matter of Vidalia's truancy came up, a collective unshakeable self-belief took hold, a communal agreement to redefine reality.

“She had a day off for educational purposes,” the Dean declared. The Professor transformed it into a veritable philosophy of applied learnin'. Yehenew invited Vidalia's class to an introduction to Ethio jazz, promisin' rhythms that would make their very souls dance.

And the Professor and Dean, demonstratin' a delightful bendin' of bureaucratic logic, proceeded to teach the school principal the art of craftin' perfect egg salad sandwiches. Darren, the monolith, with a cool benevolence, treated everyone to free ice cream, a delicious testament to the illogical, a sweet, meltin' affirmation of the unhinged truth.

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